



State of Connecticut

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Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, Senator Kissel, Representative Rebimbas and members of the Judiciary Committee. I am Senator John McKinney, representing the 28th Senatorial district. I appear before you today in strong support of Senate Bill 491, ***AAC CONCERNING HARASSMENT OF A VICTIM OF VIOLENT CRIME OR A RELATIVE OF A VICTIM OF VIOLENT CRIME***. One of the issues that arose after the tragedy at Sandy Hook school was that families of the victims reported receiving what they deemed to be harassing phone calls, emails, and on-line postings. These grieving families, who had endured the loss of their children and loved ones, now were dealing with strangers whose messages were causing them additional suffering and grief. Messages that many felt were intended to cause that added pain. In Connecticut, the current laws against harassment did not sufficiently address this situation and left the families with no recourse against those who would intentionally seek to cause them further agony.

Under current law, there is no crime specifically prohibiting intentional harassment of victims of violent crime or their families. The generic crime harassment in the second degree is a class C misdemeanor, punishable by up to three months in prison and a \$500 fine. But what this crime does not address is the sensitive nature of a crime victim or their family. Such victims have suffered injury, death, loss, pain, and on top of that, must now endure the slings and arrows of harassing individuals.

In such instances, I do not think the current penalty is sufficient. The victims in such cases have suffered already due to the violent crime. They must not have to endure further abuse at the hands of callous harassers. Such behavior must be deterred and stopped from occurring in the future. An increase in the penalty in such cases seems warranted, and will hopefully stop harassment of crime victims in the future.

As the Senator representing the families of Sandy Hook, I have seen firsthand the suffering that my friends and constituents have gone through. We cannot bring back their children, but if we can do anything that will ease their and others' burdens a bit going forward, we should take action. I believe that SB 491 will provide some small measure to address such suffering at the hands of harassers. .

I thank you for your attention to this matter, and urge you to pass this bill.